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ABSTRACT

A survey of student attitudes and knowledge vis a vis the American political system is presented. Student performance in the areas of social behavior, political attitudes, political knowledge, and political education is described for 13- and 17-year-olds for seven variables--geographical region, sex, race, parental education, size and type of community, educational preparation, and political interest. The first chapter presents an overview of survey results. Findings indicate that 13- and 17-year-olds express similar social and political attitudes, have a high degree of respect for human rights, and favor political participation. The second chapter defines the variables and describes the conventions used to report the data. Social attitudinal trends, including opposition to discrimination, support for equal-housing opportunities and racial trust, are described in chapter three. An assessment of political attitudes is included in chapter four. Knowledge of criminal rights, court role, constitutional rights, presidential power, government functions, political parties, the United Nations, and methods of changing laws is measured in chapter five. The final chapter discusses political education in the schools. Findings indicate that course work in civics is an important factor in student performance and interest. (Author/DB)

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EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

A Bicentennial Survey

FEB 1

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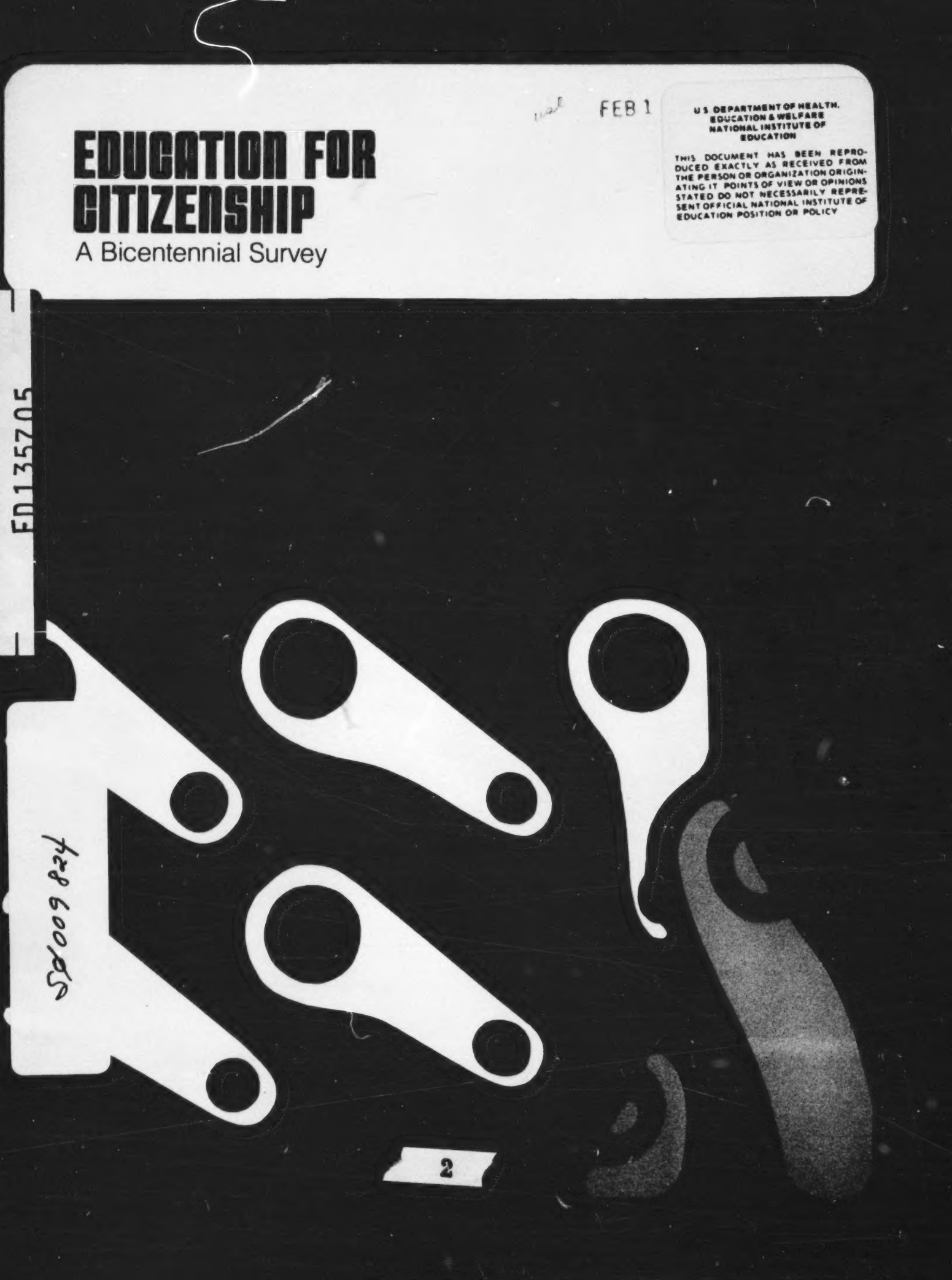

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EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

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November 1976

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FOREWORD

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is an information-gathering project that surveys the educational attainments of 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and adults (ages 26-35) in 10 learning areas: art, career and occupational development, citizenship, literature, mathematics, music, reading, science, social studies and writing. Different learning areas are assessed every year, and all areas are periodically reassessed in order to measure change in educational achievement.

Each assessment is the product of several years' work by a great many educators, scholars and lay persons from all over the country. Initially, these people design objectives for each area, proposing specific goals that they feel Americans should be achieving in the course of their education. After careful reviews, these objectives are then given to exercise (item) writers, whose task it is to create measurement tools appropriate to the objectives.

When the exercises have passed extensive reviews by subject-matter specialists and measurement experts, they are administered to probability samples of the designated age levels. The people who comprise these samples are chosen in such a way that the results of their assessment can be generalized for the entire national population. That is, on the basis of the performance of about 2,500 9-year-olds on a given exercise, we can generalize about the probable performance of all 9-year-olds in the nation.

The National Assessment also publishes a general information yearbook that describes all major aspects of the Assessment's operation. The reader who desires more detailed information about how NAEP defines its groups, prepares and scores its exercises, designs its samples, analyzes the findings and reports its results should consult the *General Information Yearbook.*[1]

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[1] *General Information Yearbook, Report 03/04-GIY* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many organizations and individuals have made substantial contributions to the citizenship/social studies assessment, from the beginning of the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 1964 to this Bicentennial-year survey of *Education for Citizenship*. Unfortunately, it is not possible to acknowledge them all here, and an apology is due to those whose names have been omitted.

The preparation of the objectives and exercises in the area of citizenship was handled by the American Institutes for Research, Palo Alto, Calif. There, materials were reviewed by dozens of consultants, including educators, employers and interested lay persons, under the general guidance of the National Assessment staff.

The administration of the citizenship/social studies assessment was conducted by the Research Triangle Institute, Raleigh, N.C., and the Measurement Research Center (MRC), Iowa City, Iowa. Scoring and processing were carried out by MRC and by the NAEP staff.

The actual preparation of this report was a collaborative effort of the National Assessment staff. Special thanks must be given to the following people: Patrice Gunderson for data processing support; Ava Powell for technical proofreading; and Marci Reser and Jessica Grant for production. Technical analysis for this report was planned and supervised by Sarah Knight; the report was written by Gerald Marriner.

Roy H. Forbes
Project Director

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

During the Bicentennial school year, the National Assessment of Educational Progress surveyed students throughout the United States to determine what they know about the American system of government, what their attitudes are toward that political system and how they feel about the rights they have in a democracy. The items discussed in this report are only a sample of the many exercises that were administered during the 1975-76 year.

The results of this study indicate that 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds express similar social and political attitudes and that these change very little during their secondary education. Their respect for the human rights of all Americans, regardless of race, sex, color, religious or political beliefs, is high, as is their estimation of the importance of participation in the political process. However, during their secondary school years students acquire a great deal of information about politics, and this new knowledge increases their interest in the political process and, presumably, their effectiveness as citizens.

This introduction provides a brief summary of the overall performances of each age level. The following chapters contain more detailed descriptions of their performance in the areas of social behavior, political attitudes, political knowledge and political education. Individual exercises are discussed in these chapters. In addition to age comparisons, performances above or below the national level are noted for the standard variables — geographical region, sex, race, parental education, and size and type of community — and also for variables that characterize education preparation and political interest. Levels of performance for certain groups are fairly uniform over most of the items. Results for these groups are highlighted only when they vary from the standard patterns of performance.

The Mean Performance Graphs

On the following graphs, the mean, or average, percentages of success on each category of items for the two assessment age groups are indicated by two horizontal lines across the graphs. Percentages for population groups are indicated as bars – the solid bars for 13-year-olds and the shaded bars for 17-year-olds.

The bars are displayed in five groups:

Region
- NE=Northeast
- C=Central
- W=West
- SE=Southeast

Size and Type of Community
- HM=High metro
- UF=Urban fringe
- MBC=Main big city
- MC=Medium city
- SP=Small places
- ER=Extreme rural
- LM=Low metro

Sex
- M=Male
- F=Female

Race
- W=White
- B=Black

Parental Education
- PHS=Post high school
- GHS=Graduated high school
- SHS=Some high school
- NHS=No high school

The populations are defined in Chapter 2. Precise data can be found in the statistical report on the second citizenship/social studies assessment.

As Exhibit 1 reveals, on overall performance 17-year-olds registered 6 percentage points higher than 13-year-olds (respective national means of 76 v. 70). Whites were just above the national average, while blacks trailed a few points behind. Thirteen-year-olds from the Northeast and Central states performed best at that age, followed by those from the Southeast and the West. Among 17-year-olds, the regional rankings were different: students from the Central states registered above the national mean and were followed in descending order by those from the Northeast, the West and the Southeast.

Among the standard variables, the greatest differences were recorded among groupings by educational level of the students' parents and by size and type of community. Students whose parents had some education beyond high school were above the national average; all others were below. In descending order, these were students whose parents had graduated from high school, had some high school education and had not attended high school. Among the different sizes and types of communities, students from the affluent urban and suburban communities (high metro) performed highest above the nation and students from low-income urban areas the furthest below. While 13-year-old students from rural areas were below the national level, 17-year-olds from these communities were above.

Among both age groups, students who discussed national, state or local politics and international affairs in their classes did better than those who did not (Table 1). Those who rarely discussed politics were well below the national mean, and those who discussed politics frequently were considerably above.

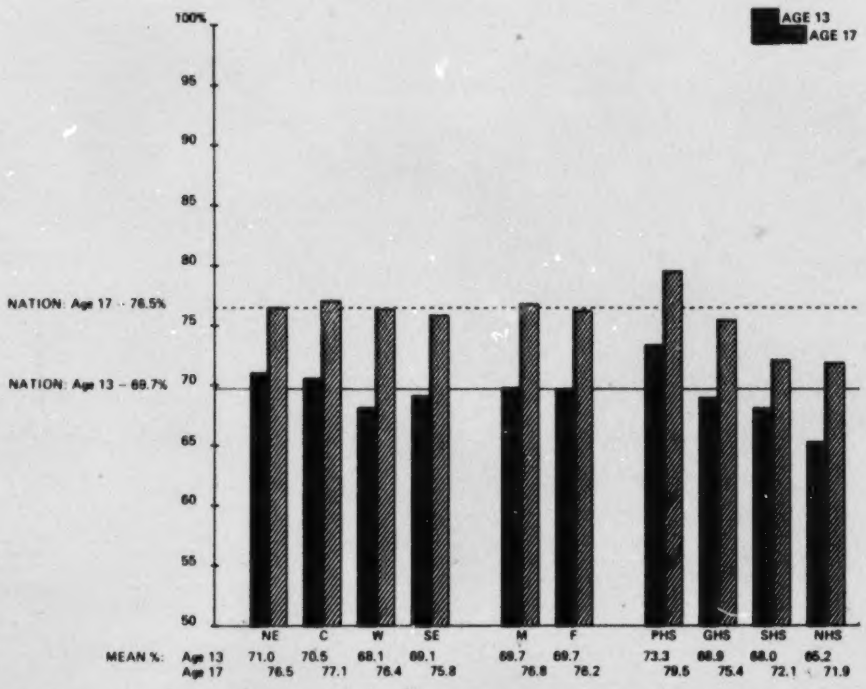
TABLE 1. Mean Performance on All Exercises by Amount of Classroom Discussion and Study, Both Ages

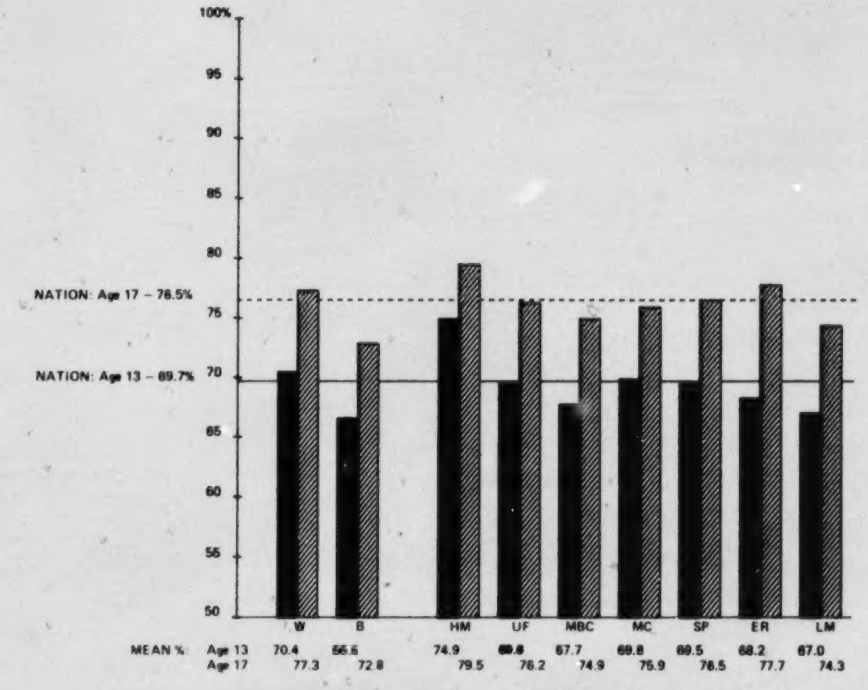
	Age 13	Age 17
How often do you have discussions about political issues in your classes?		
Rarely	65.0%	71.3%
Moderately	71.1	76.7
Frequently	75.6	80.4
In school, have you studied how to acquire and analyze information about political issues?		
Not much	*	70.7
Some	*	77.6
A good deal	*	81.1

**Not administered at this age.*

An additional special variable applied only to 17-year-olds. They were asked if they had studied how to acquire information about political issues in school and how to analyze the values and alternatives involved in political issues. Those who responded "a good deal" were 5 points above the national average, and those who replied "some" were 1 point above (Table 1). Students who answered "not much" performed nearly 6 points below the national mean.

EXHIBIT 1. Mean Performance for 13- and 17-Year-Olds on All Exercises Taken by Both Age Groups





From the summary data, one can conclude that performance is closely related to race, the amount of education of the students' parents and the size and type of community in which the students live. Geographical region and the students' sex are the least important factors in determining performance. Analyses of other variables indicate that students who discussed politics tended to do better than others, and those who had studied politics the most did much better than those students who seldom studied politics.

CHAPTER 2

REPORTING THE DATA: DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains definitions of the population groups and item sets analyzed in this study and a description of the conventions that are used to report the data.

Reporting Variables

Sex

Results are presented for males and females.

Race

Currently, results are reported for blacks and whites.

Size and Type of Community

Community types are identified both by the size of the community and by the type of employment of the majority of people in the community.

High metro, high-socioeconomic or affluent urban and suburban communities. Areas in or around cities with a population greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are in professional or managerial positions.

Low metro, low-socioeconomic or impoverished urban. Areas in or around cities with a population greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are on welfare or are not regularly employed.

Rural. Areas with a population under 10,000 where most of the residents are farmers or farm workers.

Urban fringe. Communities within the metropolitan area of a city with a population greater than 200,000, outside city limits and not in the high- or low-socioeconomic urban groups.

Main big city. Communities within the city limits of a city with a population over 200,000 and not included in the high- or low-socioeconomic urban groups.

Medium city. Cities with populations between 25,000 and 200,000.

Small places. Communities with a population of less than 25,000 and not in the rural group.

Region

The country has been divided into four regions — Northeast, Southeast, Central and West. The states that are included in each region are shown in Exhibit 2.

EXHIBIT 2. National Assessment Geographic Regions

Parental Education

Four categories of parental education are defined by National Assessment. These categories include: (1) those whose parents have had no high school education, (2) those who have at least one parent with some high school education, (3) those who have at least one parent who graduated from high school and (4) those who have at least one parent who has had some post-high school education.

Discussion of Politics

Three "political-discussion" categories describe the amount of political discussion in which 13- and 17-year-olds report they participated. The three amounts are: rarely, moderately and frequently.

Study About Political Issues

Seventeen-year-old students reported whether they studied about political issues. These "study-politics" categories describe the amount of study about political issues reported by 17-year-olds: not much, some and a good deal.

Summarizing the Data

This report includes percentages of success for individual items. Also, the mean (simple average) of a set of results is used as the measure of central tendency. Percentages for each item in a particular content group were averaged to obtain a national level of performance.

Conventions of Reporting the Data

National Assessment uses a national probability sample to estimate the percentage of individuals in a given group who could successfully complete a given item. Thus, for example, when we say that "85% of the 13-year-olds gave a correct response," we mean that 85% is an estimate of the proportion of all 13-year-olds in the country who could have answered correctly. As in any survey work, the percentage estimates are subject to sampling error because assessment was applied only to a sample, not to the entire population.

The particular sample used in this survey is one of a large number of possible samples of the same size that could have been selected using the same sample design. Percentages obtained from each of the possible samples would differ from each other, and the standard error of these percentages, if it were known, would provide a measure of the sampling variability among all possible samples. In this report, standard errors are

estimated for specific exercises.

The standard error of a sample statistic can be used to construct a confidence interval for the estimate. The interval from two standard errors below to two standard errors above the particular sample value would include the average of all possible sample values in about 95% of the samples. When we note that a percentage is a "significant difference," we mean that it is more than twice the standard error; we are therefore 95% confident that the difference is real and not an artifact of sampling variability.

This report concerns 13- and 17-year-olds' performance on approximately one-eighth of the items administered to each age group in the citizenship/social studies assessment.

All exercises used in this survey have been released by National Assessment.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL ATTITUDES

As citizens in a democracy, Americans acknowledge certain principles that are essential to the maintenance of that democracy. Do young Americans believe in these same principles? Do they believe that everyone should be treated equally, regardless of their sex, race or religious beliefs? Do they recognize that all citizens have equal rights, no matter what their political opinions may be? Do they believe that getting a job should depend on their talents, abilities and skills, or are they willing to accept their advance through discrimination against others? These are the types of questions that are raised in this chapter.

For many of the variables, the trends for social attitudes are similar to those noted for overall performance (Exhibit 3). As it is for all items, parental education is an important factor, but the differences in performance according to size and type of community do not vary as greatly as before. Race remains a predictor at age 13, but less so for 17-year-olds. There are some fluctuations among geographic regions, with students at age 13 in the Northeast and at age 17 in the West being above the nation.

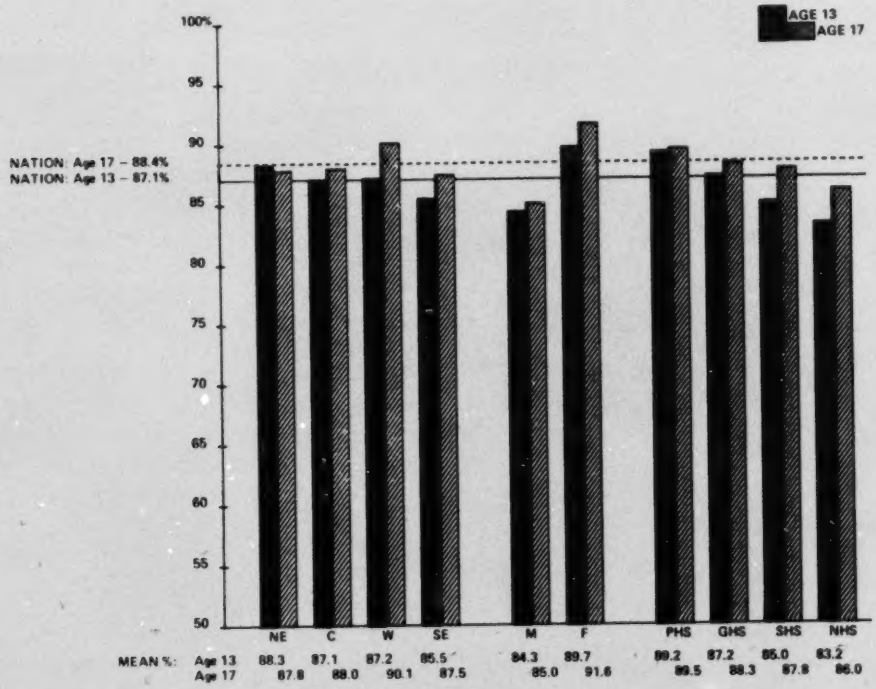
Most oppose racial or religious discrimination.

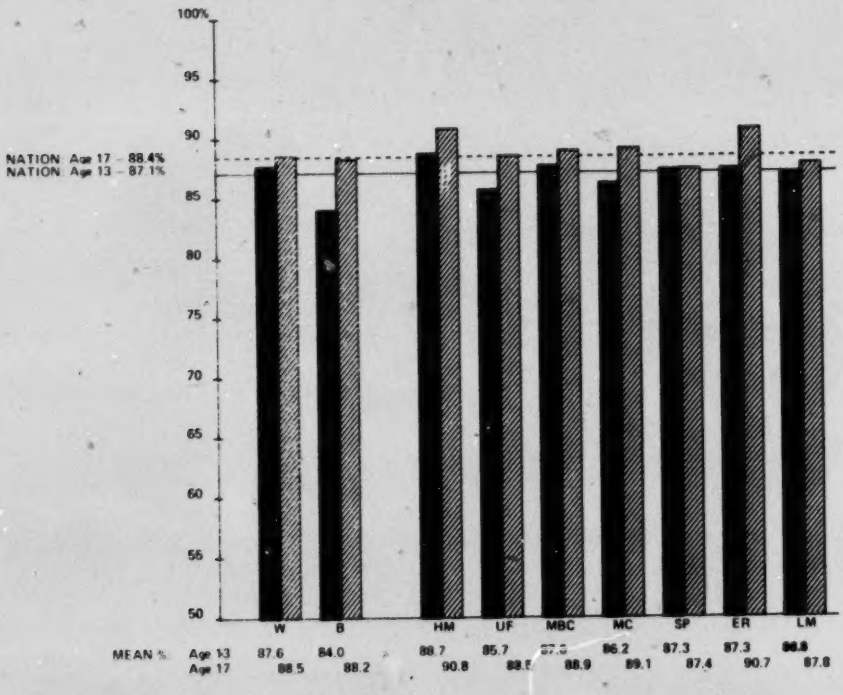
What should be the determining factor in getting a job? Should it be one's religion, skin color or sex? Should it be one's political opinions or his or her abilities and skills? Nearly all students of both ages agreed that getting a job should be dependent on neither skin color nor religion. Ninety-seven percent of both age levels said skin color should not be a factor; 96% of the 13-year-olds and 98% of the 17-year-olds agreed that one's religion should not be considered. Thirteen-year-old blacks scored significantly above the national level in their responses to the question on the importance of skin color. At age 17, however, there were no significant differences between the races on the same question.

Most oppose political and sex discrimination, but agreement between races and sexes is not uniform.

Should getting a job depend on one's political opinions? Eighty-two percent of the 13-year-olds and 92% of the 17-year-olds agreed that it should not. The disparity in performances between races was unusually high on this

EXHIBIT 3. Mean Performance for 13- and 17-Year-Olds on Items Reflecting Social Attitudes





exercise. Thirteen-year-old whites were 4 points above the national average on this exercise; blacks were 19 points below. Seventeen-year-old whites were 2 points above the nation; blacks were 8 points below. Should one's sex remove that person from consideration for a job? Eighty-six percent of the 13-year-olds thought not, as did 87% of the 17-year-olds. Males were below the nation on this exercise (-6 points for 13-year-olds and -7 points for 17-year-olds), and females were significantly above the nation (6 points at both ages). "Do you think getting a job should depend on your ABILITIES and SKILLS?" Ninety-four percent of the youngsters of both ages answered, "Yes."

More females than males oppose sex discrimination in hiring.

Overall, females outperform males on social-attitudes exercises.

The most notable divergence from overall performance appears in the sex category. In the exercises on social attitudes, females outperformed males at age 13 by over 5 points and increased the performance gap at age 17. The special variable about frequency of political discussion did not yield the extreme differences between age groups for social attitudes as it did for overall performance on the exercises (see Table 2).

Class discussion and study of political issues do not greatly affect performance on social-attitudes items.

TABLE 2. Mean Performance on Social-Attitudes Exercises by Amount of Classroom Discussion and Study, Both Ages

	Age 13	Age 17
How often do you have discussions about political issues in your classes?		
Rarely	85.9%	87.6%
Moderately	86.9	88.1
Frequently	89.3	89.4
In school, have you studied how to acquire and analyze information about political issues?		
Not much	*	86.8
Some	*	88.9
A good deal	*	88.9

**Not administered at this age.*

Racial trust is high, but there are still group differences.

A number of exercises were directed specifically at determining the students' attitudes toward different races. "If you just met someone who was Oriental, how sure would you be that the person could be trusted?" The same question was asked about blacks and whites. The desirable answer for all three questions was, "I wouldn't be able to say one way or the other if the person could be trusted." This was the response of 94% of the 13-year-olds and 95% of the 17-year-olds with respect to an Oriental, 91% of the 13-year-olds and 94% of the 17-year-olds with respect to a black, and 91% of the 13-year-olds and 95% of the 17-year-olds if the person was white. Among the races, at age 13, whites were 1 point above the nation and blacks 9 points below on the question of trusting a black. On trusting a white person, white 13-year-olds were 2 points above the nation and blacks 10 points below.

Regions show different levels of willingness to have friends or leaders of a different race.

"Would you want to have a person of a different skin color be your friend?" Ninety-four percent of the 13-year-olds and 95% of the 17-year-olds said that they would or that they did not know. "Would you want to have a person of a different skin color be your teacher?" Eighty-six percent of the 13-year-olds and 90% of the 17-year-olds thought this would be desirable or did not know. There were no significant differences from the national level for whites or blacks. Thirteen-year-old, but not 17-year-old, students from the low-income urban communities were significantly above the nation (8 points) in expressing their willingness to have a person of a different skin color for their teacher. "Would you want to have a person of a different skin color sit next to you in school every day?" Eighty-three percent of the 13-year-olds and 86% of the 17-year-olds said they would or did not know. Fluctuations in the responses of students from the different geographical regions to this item are interesting. At age 13, students from the Northeast are 5 points above the nation and youngsters from the Southeast 10 points below. At age 17, the Southeast is still 7 points below the nation,

but now the West, instead of the Northeast, registers significantly above the nation (4 points).

Nine out of 10 support equal-housing opportunity.

Are students also willing to support equal opportunities in housing for all races? They were asked, "Do you feel a family should be able to move into a part of town where people of a different skin color live?" A large majority from both ages answered yes. Nine out of 10 thought that the family should be able to move in and that their skin color should not make any difference. Among 13-year-olds, blacks were 4 points above the nation and students from rural areas 5 points above. At age 17, rural students were 4 points above the nation, whites were 1 point below and blacks 7 points above the nation.

What would they do if they saw someone fighting in the hall? Less than half would break it up.

In a final item, students were asked, "If you saw several students fighting in a school hallway, what would you do?" It was the only question in this section on which only a minority of students from both ages offered an acceptable response. Forty-seven percent of the 13-year-olds and 37% of the 17-year-olds said they would try to stop the fight themselves or would look for a teacher or principal to stop the fight. There were a number of significant differences that varied from the usual group performances. Among 13-year-olds, whites were 2 points below the national level, but blacks showed no significant difference. Also, high-metro students were 13 points below the nation, and urban-fringe students were 10 points below. At age 17, whites were still 1 point below the nation. Students whose parents had no high school were 8 points above the nation (13-year-olds were 11 points above), and the students from the affluent urban and suburban communities were now 10 points above. For both ages, males scored lowest and females highest on this exercise.

One can conclude from the answers given to the exercises in this section that American youth acknowledge concern for the well-being and dignity of others. Most recognize that dis-

Social attitudes change little between the ages of 13 and 17.

crimination against others because of their race, sex, religious beliefs or political opinions is wrong. It is also apparent that their social attitudes change little between ages 13 and 17, for the latter age group performed only 1 point higher than the younger group on all the exercises.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL ATTITUDES

The items in this section did not measure the students' knowledge of the American political system. Rather, the questions and statements that follow indirectly reveal attitudes that young Americans have toward the basic underlying principles and concepts of our democracy. One cannot overemphasize the importance of these attitudes. The individual rights of every citizen are carefully defined in the Constitution, but the enjoyment of those rights and the freedoms of a democracy are dependent upon their acceptance by all members of a free society and their equal application to all.

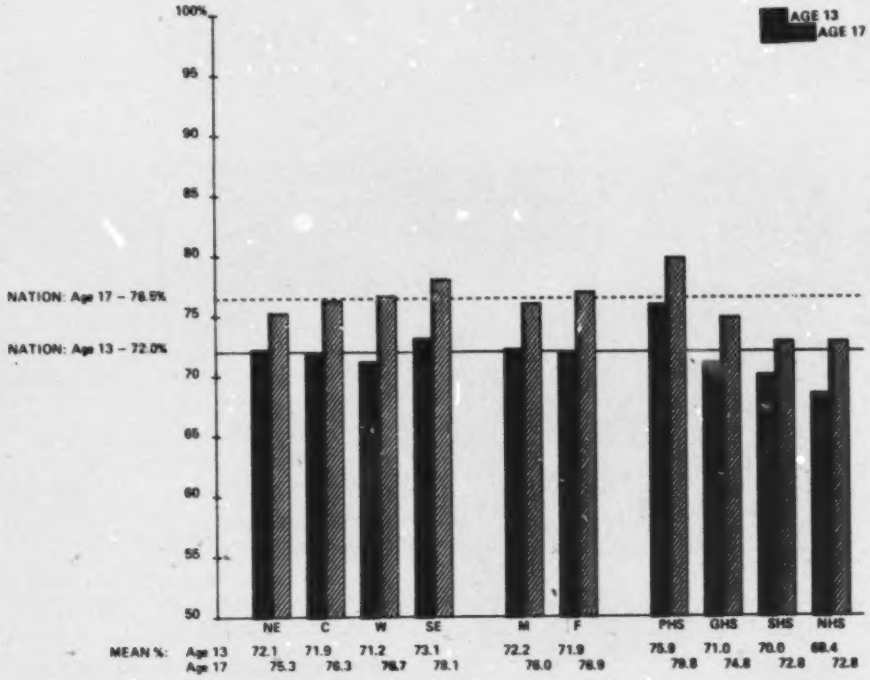
Most of the trends described in the previous chapter are evident in this section on political attitudes (Exhibit 4). Again, the national performance level for 17-year-olds is higher than that of 13-year-olds (76% and 72%, respectively). The performance levels of the standard-variable groups identified by sex, parental education, and size and type of community conform to their overall performances. The most noticeable differences are that youth of both ages from the Southeast registered above the nation (1 point for 13-year-olds and 2 points for 17-year-olds) and that differences between the races are negligible. The special variables for both ages reflected the same trend for political attitudes as they did for performance over all exercises (see Table 3).

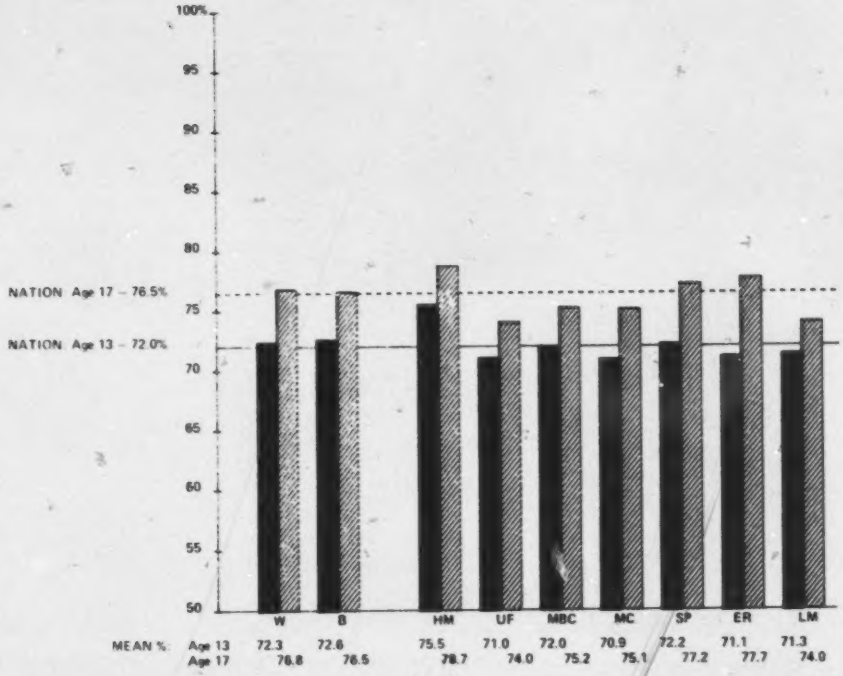
TABLE 3. Mean Performance on Political-Attitudes Exercises by Amount of Classroom Discussion and Study, Both Ages

	Age 13	Age 17
How often do you have discussions about political issues in your classes?		
Rarely	67.9%	72.3%
Moderately	73.1	76.1
Frequently	77.4	80.2
In school, have you studied how to acquire and analyze information about political issues?		
Not much	*	69.4
Some	*	77.6
A good deal	*	83.0

**Not administered at this age.*

EXHIBIT 4. Mean Performance for 13- and 17-Year-Olds on Items Reflecting Political Attitudes





Respondents express some doubt about the importance of voting.

Perhaps the most important principle in a democracy is that the vote of each of its citizens counts equally and that the continuance of that democracy is dependent upon the constant and continuing participation of its citizens in the election process. Recent public opinion polls indicate that a high percentage of American adults have become disillusioned, certainly skeptical and sometimes cynical about elections and government leaders. Younger Americans seem to share some of their disillusionment. Students of both ages were asked if they agreed or disagreed with these statements: (1) "A lot of elections are NOT important enough to vote in" and (2) "It is important to vote even if it looks like your candidate does NOT have a chance to win." The desirable response to the first is "disagree" and to the second, "agree." How did each group do? Fifty-six percent of the 13-year-olds and 68% of the 17-year-olds answered both acceptably. Among the younger students, whites scored 2 points above the nation.The same percentage was maintained by 17-year-old whites, but blacks at age 17 dropped to 10 points below the national level. Although 17-year-olds had a higher percentage of acceptable responses, that figure could be considered disconcerting when one realizes that within a year they will be of voting age.

There is strong support for equal weight of each citizen's vote.

Do young Americans recognize that the vote of every citizen should count equally? Their answers to a number of questions indicate that most of them do. "Should rich people's votes count more than poor people's votes?" "No," replied 97% of the 13-year-olds and 99% of the 17-year-olds. The major differences within the younger group were in the race category, where whites were 1 point above the nation and blacks were 5 points below. At age 17, the difference between races had almost disappeared.

Women's votes count as heavily as men's.

"Should men's votes count more than women's votes?" Ninety-six percent of the 13-year-olds and 97% of the 17-year-olds said they should not. Again, for 13-year-olds, the major differences were in the race category. Whites were 1 point above the nation and blacks 5 points below. At age 17, the

difference between races again had disappeared.

Most believe educated people's votes should not count more than those of uneducated people.

"Should educated people's votes count more than the votes of people without much education?" "No," was the reply of 93% of the 13-year-olds and 95% of the 17-year-olds. Although 13-year-old blacks ranked at the national level in the area of political attitudes, on this exercise, as in the two preceding, they were below the nation (-8 and -5 points, respectively). At age 17, there were no significant differences from the nation in the race category.

In a final related question, students were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "Some people should not be allowed to vote in elections because these people are NOT smart enough." Thirteen-year-olds outscored 17-year-olds on this exercise, 88% disagreeing to 84% of the older students.

Should we have only one political party? "No," say two-thirds of the 13-year-olds and three-fourths of the older students.

Freedom of choice led to the early founding of separate political parties, and, historically, the election process in the United States involved a contest between at least two major political parties, with frequent competition from third parties. Do students recognize this freedom of choice as being important in a democracy? They were asked, "Would it be better if we had only one political party in the United States?" Sixty-two percent of the 13-year-olds and 76% of the 17-year-olds thought that it would NOT be better. The answers to the question brought a number of significant differences in variance with overall performances for political attitudes. Thirteen-year-old blacks scored 7 points below the nation; at age 17, they dropped 14 points below, while whites were 3 points above. The older males also performed 4 points above the nation, with females 4 points below.

Freedom of speech and the press are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Students were indirectly asked to reveal their attitudes toward these constitutional rights when they were asked, "Should the President have the right to stop the radio, television and news-

At least three out of four realize the President cannot censor the news media.

papers from saying bad things about him?" Seventy-four percent of the 13-year-olds and 83% of the 17-year-olds did not think he should have that right. Seventeen-year-old students from the Northeast, whose overall performance for political attitudes was below the national level, were 6 points above the nation.

Another underlying principle upon which our country was founded and which was espoused in the Declaration of Independence is that there should be equal justice for all. To get an indication of their support for this principle, students were asked, "Should unfair laws be changed?" A large majority of both ages agreed that they should (91% of the 13-year-olds and 95% of the 17-year-olds).

Interest in politics is higher in the Southeast and among blacks.

Are students interested in politics? Certainly to some extent, and the interest is more marked among the older age group. Forty-five percent of the 13-year-olds and 57% of the 17-year-olds indicated that they were interested in learning about government. At both ages, more youngsters from the Southeast than in the nation as a whole indicated interest. Thirteen-year-old blacks were 11 points above the nation on this question; 17-year-olds were 8 points above.

Seventy-six percent of the 13-year-olds and 70% of the 17-year-olds said they liked to guess who is going to win in elections. Do students like to watch TV programs about elections and politics? Only a small minority. Seventeen percent of the 13-year-olds and 25% of the 17-year-olds replied that they did. Thirteen-year-olds from small towns were 3 points above the nation; whites of the same age dropped 2 points below the nation; blacks were 10 points above.

Finally, students were queried about their own civic involvement. "Have you ever worked individually or with other students to try to bring about changes like these in your school?" they were asked. Five alternatives were listed: (1) changes in school rules, (2) improvements in the buildings or

Two-thirds indicate some amount of personal civic involvement.

grounds, (3) changes in courses offered, (4) increase in extracurricular activities and (5) changes in ways decisions are made. Changing ways decisions are made was mentioned most frequently by 13-year-olds (53%), and changing school rules was the first choice of 17-year-olds (55%). Sixty-eight percent of the 13-year-olds and 69% of the 17-year-olds said that they had done at least two of the above. Whites at both ages were 2 points below the nation, while 13-year-old blacks were 16 points above and 17-year-old blacks 11 points above. At the older age level, students from the Western states were 6 points above the national level, and those from the Northeast were 9 points below.

CHAPTER 5

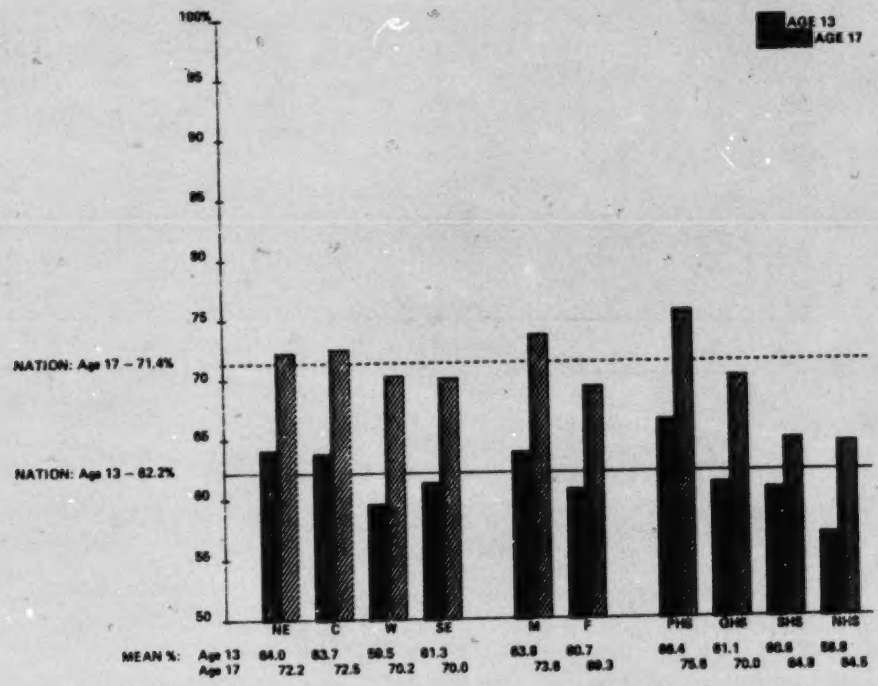
POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

The most notable difference in performance between ages 13 and 17 was registered in the area of political knowledge. In their replies to 34 questions, 13-year-olds established a national performance level of 62%, while the level for 17-year-olds answering the same questions was 71%. The percentage of 13-year-olds answering correctly was higher than that for 17-year-olds on only 2 of the 34 items.

The performance for the standard variable groups on questions of political knowledge reflected the same trends as for performance over all exercises, but the comparative differences between group and national performance were more extreme in this category than in any other (Exhibit 5). Thirteen-year-olds from low-socioeconomic urban communities were 5 points below the nation, while those from affluent urban and suburban areas were 7 points above. Whites registered 1 point above the nation, but blacks were 6 points below. Three points separated the performance levels of males and females. In the geographical regions, students from the Northeast and Central states were about 2 points above the nation, while those from the Southeast were nearly 1 point below and those from the West nearly 3 points below.

Seventeen-year-olds performed similarly. Eleven points separated those students whose parents had some post-high school education from those whose parents had not attended high school. There were 7 points separating students in the low-income urban areas from those in the high-income urban and suburban schools. Seventeen-year-olds from rural areas were about 1 point above the nation, whites were 1 point above the nation and blacks were 7 points below. Males were 2 points above and females 2 points below the national performance level. Students from the Northeast and the Central states again were higher than those from the Southeast and the West, but the differences were not as great. For both ages, performances according to the special variables coincided closely with overall trends (Table 4).

EXHIBIT 5. Mean Performance for 13- and 17-Year-Olds on Items Reflecting Political Knowledge



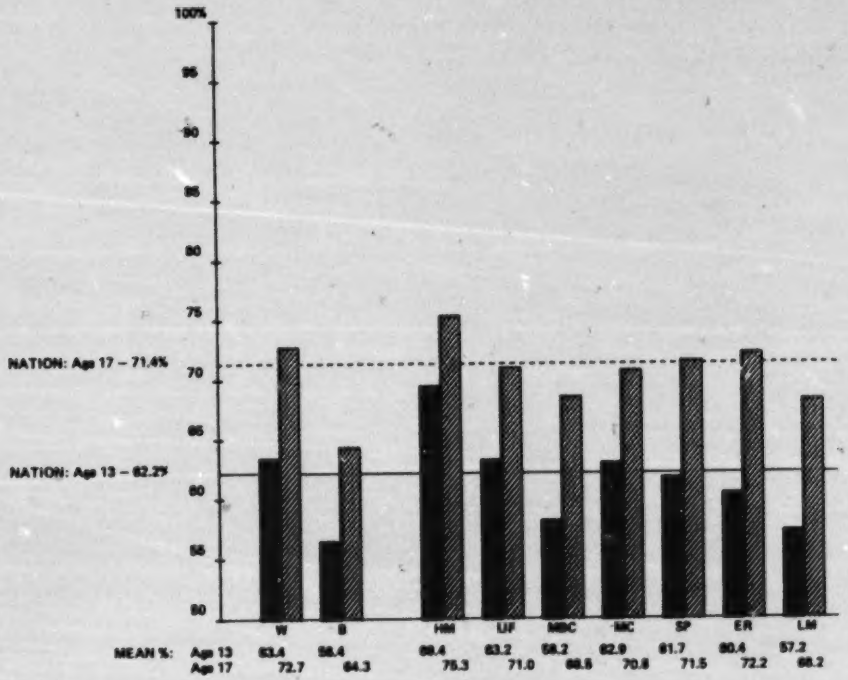


TABLE 4. Mean Performance on Political-Knowledge Exercises by Amount of Classroom Discussion and Study, Both Ages

	Age 13	Age 17
How often do you have discussions about political issues in your classes?		
Rarely	58.4%	67.5%
Moderately	63.4	71.3
Frequently	66.8	74.5
In school, have you studied how to acquire and analyze information about political issues?		
Not much	*	65.6
Some	*	72.5
A good deal	*	75.7

**Not administered at this age.*

Performance was very high on items dealing with criminal rights.

It is interesting that both ages did best on items about criminal rights. Probably this can be attributed to their constant exposure to television programs that remind them repeatedly that police, private investigators and lawyers must recognize the rights of the accused. The students were given this situation: "Suppose a person has just been arrested because the police have evidence that he has stolen some money. Look at the rights listed below. Decide which rights the accused person has now that he is under arrest." Ninety nine percent of the 17-year-olds recognized that the accused person had the rights to have a lawyer represent him and to know what he was accused of. Ninety-eight percent of the 13-year-olds responded similarly. Only slightly fewer students, 97% of the 17-year-olds and 91% of the 13-year-olds, were aware that the accused person also had the right to remain silent when police asked questions about the crime. A large majority of both ages (92% of the 17-year-olds and 88% of the 13-year-olds) knew that the accused person did not have the right to go free if he returned the stolen money. Both ages registered lowest on this question: "Does the accused person have the right to see a member of his family before he is jailed?" Fifty-six percent of the 17-year-olds

and 35% of the 13-year-olds answered correctly that this was not a right of the accused.

Most students also were aware of the main duty of a jury in a criminal trial. Ninety-four percent of the 17-year-olds and 88% of the 13-year-olds said it was to determine guilt or innocence rather than to present evidence, to prosecute the defendant or to pass sentence.

Performance was lower on questions dealing with the powers of courts.

Students were not as cognizant of the jurisdictional powers and limits of courts in the United States, although again 17-year-olds scored higher than the 13-year-olds. "Could a court in the United States decide whether a woman had been unfairly denied a job that a man had gotten?" Eighty-two percent of the 17-year-olds replied yes, and 70% of the 13-year-olds responded affirmatively. "Could a court in the United States decide that the United States should declare war on another country?" Seventy-nine percent of the 17-year-olds and 73% of the 13-year-olds recognized that this was not within the court's jurisdiction. "Could a court in the United States decide whether a man has taken another person's idea for a new invention?" Seventy-two percent of the older students said it could; 57% of the younger group gave the same response.

Most students recognize their own constitutional rights, too.

While students showed a high awareness of the rights of the accused, they were not unaware of their own constitutional rights. Freedom of religion, freedom of press and the right to a fair trial are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights; most students recognized these rights in their answers to the following questions. Asked to choose which of the following is NOT a constitutional right of American citizens — (1) the right of freedom of speech, (2) the right to practice the religion of one's choice, (3) the right to determine who can purchase and live in the house next door and (4) the right to a fair trial when accused of a crime — 94% of the 17-year-olds and 86% of the 13-year-olds correctly identified answer number three.

"Does Congress have the right to pass a law to establish a national church?" "No," re-

plied 82% of the 17-year-olds and 69% of the 13-year-olds. Thirteen-year-old students from the Southeast scored unusually high on this item, 6 points above the nation. "Does Congress have the right to pass a law that a newspaper cannot criticize the President or Congress?" Again 84% of the 17-year-olds and 72% of the 13-year-olds responded negatively. "Does the President have the right to stop the radio, television and newspapers from saying bad things about him?" Most recognized that he does not. Eighty-seven percent of the older students and 80% of the younger age replied no.

The Fifth Amendment right is not widely understood.

Students scored much lower on this related question: "A member of the Communist party is accused of trying to kill a member of Congress. The Communist refuses to testify on the grounds that he might incriminate himself. Does he have to testify in court?" The correct response is, "No, he does not," for he is protected by an amendment to the Constitution. Forty-seven percent of the 17-year-olds, but only 23% of the 13-year-olds, answered correctly. A majority of the 13-year-olds (55%) thought that the Communist would have to testify if the prosecutor could show proof that he did try to kill the congressman (39% of the 17-year-olds gave the same answer). Six percent of the younger group and 3% of the older students said he should testify because Communists are a threat to the United States. Sixteen percent of the 13-year-olds and 11% of the 17-year-olds indicated that they did not know the answer.

Three out of four know that presidents, judges and army generals must always obey the law.

The Bill of Rights guarantees equal rights under the law. Similarly, a basic principle of our democracy is that the law applies equally to all. To test their understanding of this principle, students were asked three questions: (1) "Does the President ALWAYS have to obey the laws of the United States?" (2) "Does a judge ALWAYS have to obey the laws of the United States?" (3) "Does an army general ALWAYS have to obey the laws of the United States?" Seventy-five percent of the 17-year-olds said that all three always must obey the laws of the United States. Only 1% fewer of the 13-year-olds

responded similarly to all three questions. For 17-year-olds, this was the one exercise in political knowledge on which females scored higher than males, registering 3 points above the nation, while the males were 3 points below. It is also noteworthy, especially in light of our recent political history, that 12% of the 13-year-olds and 14% of the 17-year-olds thought that the President of the United States did not always have to obey the laws of the country.

One of every seven 17-year-olds thinks the President does not always have to obey the law.

In a series of questions on the responsibilities of the chief executive, a large majority from both age levels indicated that they knew the President of the United States could suggest new laws to Congress and veto laws passed by Congress. Ninety-one percent of the 17-year-olds and 81% of the 13-year-olds knew of the veto power; 88% and 87% were the respective figures indicating an awareness of the President's right to express his desires to Congress. Considerably fewer (53% of the 17-year-olds and 46% of the 13-year-olds) knew that the President does not have the power to appoint people to Congress.

About half at each age know that the President can appoint people to Congress.

Some of the lowest percentages were registered in response to questions regarding the composition and responsibilities of the legislative branch of the federal government. Fifty-three percent of the 17-year-olds and 31% of the 13-year-olds knew that each state has two senators in the U.S. Senate. Fifty-six percent of the 17-year-olds and 32% of the 13-year-olds were aware that the number of congressmen from each state in the U.S. House of Representatives varies with the population of the state.

Performance on questions about the Senate and House was quite low.

"Does Congress have the right to pass a law that every adult in the country has to double the amount of income tax paid to the government?" It does, and 46% of the 17-year-olds and 41% of the 13-year-olds gave the correct answer.

The lowest percentages for each age group in the area of political knowledge came in response to this question: "Suppose the President sends troops to another country to fight. What action can the Congress take to

Few students know what steps Congress can take if a President sends troops to fight a war without Congressional approval.

stop U.S. participation in the fighting?" Congress can stop the fighting by exercising its power of the purse and refusing to provide money for further military action. Sixteen percent of the 13-year-olds and 22% of the 17-year-olds knew this. The most common response was that Congress could declare the President's action unconstitutional (39% of the 13-year-olds and 46% of the 17-year-olds).

Awareness of local government functions is higher at age 17.

To determine if students were aware of the functions of local governments, they were asked, "Do local governments usually make laws about military services?" They do not, and this was the answer of 71% of the 17-year-olds and 51% of the 13-year-olds. To a second question, "Do local governments usually operate public elementary and high schools?" Seventy-one percent of the 17-year-olds and 69% of the 13-year-olds responded correctly in the affirmative. Seventeen-year-olds from rural areas scored significantly lower (8 points below the nation) on the second question.

Nearly half of the 13-year-olds and three-fourths of the 17-year-olds know it is not against the law to start another political party.

The Constitution says nothing about the role of political parties in the processes of American government. Nevertheless, only 37% of the 17-year-olds and 31% of the 13-year-olds marked as false the statement that "the U.S. Constitution states the candidates for President will be candidates chosen by political parties." "Is it against the law to start a new political party other than the Democratic and Republican parties?" students were asked. Forty-two percent of the 13-year-olds and 72% of the 17-year-olds answered correctly that it was not against the law.

Another series of questions assessed the students' awareness of similarities and the differences between our form of government and others. For example, to the question, "Is the United States the only country that has political parties?" 80% of the 17-year-olds and 78% of the 13-year-olds answered correctly it is not. "Is the United States the only country that has national leaders who are elected?" Again, 80% of the 17-year-olds and 75% of the 13-year-olds answered correctly that it is not. Sixty-four percent of the

17-year-olds and 47% of the 13-year-olds also recognized that the United States is not the only country with a written constitution.

On this last item, percentages for 13-year-olds from the Southeast and blacks were above the national average (8 and 11 points, respectively). The reasons are not apparent. The performance of 17-year-old blacks showed no significant difference from the national level, and 17-year-old students from the Southeast performed 4 points below the nation.

Understanding of United Nations is not widespread.

Although the United States is a member of the United Nations, the functions of that international organization evidently are not clearly understood by students. They were asked three questions: (1) "Under the U.N. Charter, can the United Nations order two of its member countries to stop fighting a war?" The United Nations does not have that power. A higher percentage of 13-year-olds (47%) than 17-year-olds (41%) gave the correct answer. (2) "Under the U.N. Charter, can the United Nations put a limit on the price one of its member countries can charge for the oil it sells to other countries?" Again the answer is, "No." Fifty-five percent of the 17-year-olds and 52% of the 13-year-olds responded correctly. (3) "Under the U.N. Charter, can the United Nations tell a member country that it should not mistreat people of different races who live in that country?" Again, 13-year-olds (40%) were correct slightly more often than 17-year-olds (39%) in recognizing that the United Nations is empowered to take such action. On this last question, 13-year-olds in the Southeast performed 8 points above the nation and those from the Central states 6 points below. Even more notable is the fact that black youngsters from this age level performed 18 points above the national mean and whites 2 points below. It is difficult to assess the reasons why. Blacks are understandably sensitive to the issue of racism, but for 17-year-olds, there was no significant difference between blacks and whites on this same item. Similarly, for 17-year-olds, there was no apparent difference in performance for students from either the Southeast or the Central states.

Most know that laws can be changed and know several ways to get changes made; however, performances of groups varied widely.

Do students know that laws can be changed? Most of them do (91% of the 13-year-olds and 96% of the 17-year-olds). They were asked, "What could a person in your community try to do if there was a local law that he considered unjust?" Fifty-five percent of the 13-year-olds and 61% of the 17-year-olds suggested getting in contact with elected officials by either writing or speaking to them. Next to getting in touch with someone in authority, circulating or signing petitions was the most popular means of trying to correct an unjust law (26% of the 13-year-olds and 53% of the 17-year-olds). Legal action was the third choice of both ages (20%). "Go to court" was the brief proposal of one 13-year-old. "They could sue em," suggested another. One other added, "If he thought it was unconstitutional he could take it to court." The fourth most commonly repeated suggestion by both age levels (14% of the 13-year-olds and 15% of the 17-year-olds) was to demonstrate, protest or picket. This included those who would resort to civil disobedience, which they understood as being an organized group activity for disobeying a rule to make a point. Suggestions involving violence or destruction of property were unacceptable. Fifty-four percent of the 13-year-olds and 72% of the 17-year-olds gave at least two acceptable and different responses.

Among 13-year-olds, this was the one exercise on which females performed better than males (5 points above v. 5 points below the nation). Performance difference between certain other groupings were much more extreme. Whites were 4 points above the nation; blacks were 20 points below. Students whose parents had not attended high school were 21 points below the national performance level; those whose parents had some post-high school education were 13 points above. Youngsters from rural areas were 14 points below the nation; their high-metro counterparts were 23 points above. Finally, students from the Southeast were 7 points below the nation on this exercise.

At age 17, differences tended not to be as extreme. The Southeast was only 5 points down; the Central states were 4 points above the national average. There were no score differences between the sexes. Whites still scored highest (+2 points), but the performance decrement with blacks was diminished (-15 points). There were no significant differences for youth from rural or high-metro areas, but students from small towns were 3 points above the national average and those from the inner city 10 points below.

It has been evident throughout the survey that the standard variables strongly related to students' performances. This was most pronounced in the area of political knowledge.

CHAPTER 6

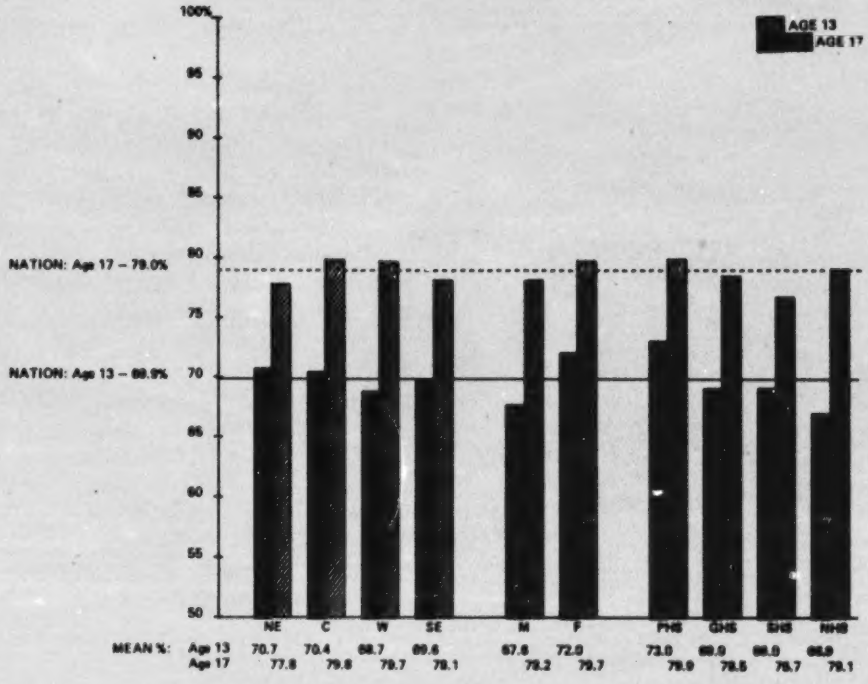
POLITICAL EDUCATION

This final chapter on political education provides some information about the schools themselves. Does the school curriculum encourage discussion of politics? Are students learning how to acquire information about political issues and how to analyze those issues? Have courses related to politics increased their interest in government and public affairs? What is the climate within the schools? Are students encouraged to use their own minds and can they openly disagree with their teachers? These are the types of questions important to the assessment of political education.

Thirteen-year-olds responded to 8 items (their national mean was about 70%); 17-year-olds responded to the same 8 items with a national mean of 79%. Seventeen-year-olds replied to an additional 7 items; their national mean was 76% over the 15 items. There were no "correct" answers to the questions in this section. Rather all answers were scored as desirable or undesirable.

As usual, most of the standard variables reflected the typical overall patterns of performance (Exhibit 6). The two notable exceptions were in the categories of sex and race. For both ages, females registered higher than males (4 points difference for 13-year-olds and 2 points difference for 17-year-olds). For 13-year-olds, blacks were about 3 points above whites, while at age 17, whites were nearly 1 point above blacks. The most remarkable findings were among the special variables. They conformed to the usual patterns, but the ranges were much greater (see Table 5). There was a 33-point difference at age 13 and a 32-point spread at age 17 between students who said they discussed politics rarely and those who discussed politics frequently. Among 17-year-olds, those who admitted that they had studied politics very little were 10 points below the national level. Those who studied politics a good deal were 9 points above. These figures, like those for special variables in earlier sections, showed strong evidence that course work in classes related to politics was an important factor in higher levels of performance.

EXHIBIT 6. Mean Performance for 13- and 17-Year-Olds on a Common Set of Items Reflecting Political Education



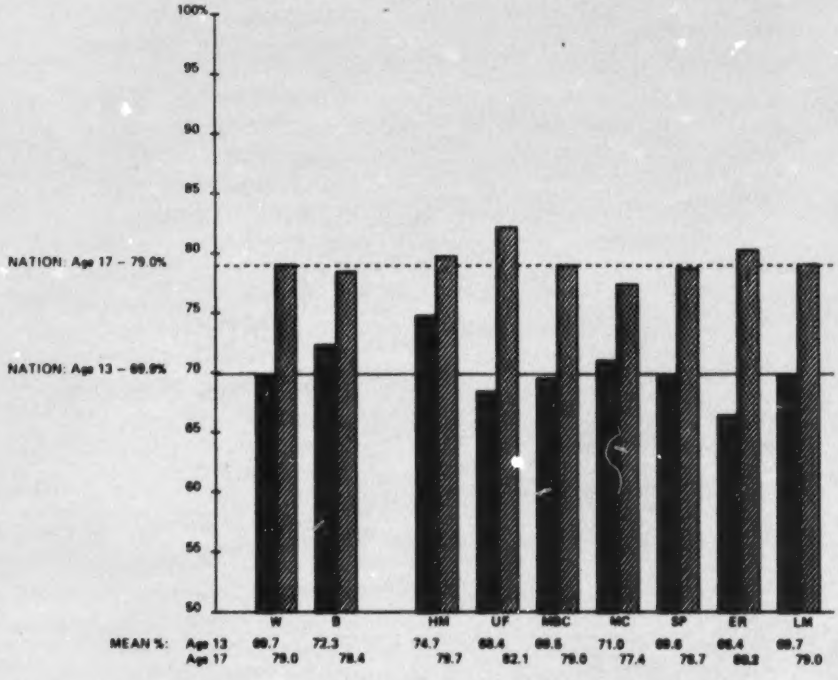


TABLE 5. Mean Performance on Political-Education Exercises by Amount of Classroom Discussion and Study, Both Ages

	Age 13	Age 17
How often do you have discussions about political issues in your classes?		
Rarely	54.5%	59.5%
Moderately	75.6	82.1
Frequently	87.4	91.3
In school, have you studied how to acquire and analyze information about political issues?		
Not much	*	68.5
Some	*	80.8
A good deal	*	88.0

**Not administered at this age.*

Most students report open and comfortable school environments.

What is the climate within the schools? A large majority of students from both ages answered "always," "often" or "sometimes" to the following statements: "Students are encouraged to make up their own minds" (88% of both ages gave a desirable response); "Teachers try to get students to speak freely and openly in class" (82% of the 13-year-olds and 90% of the 17-year-olds agreed that they did); "Students can feel free to disagree openly with their teachers" (75% of the 13-year-olds and 82% of the 17-year-olds felt they could); "Our teachers respect our opinions and encourage us to express them" (85% of both ages agreed that they did). On the last item, students were told, "In some schools the students help decide about school affairs; in others, the teachers and administrators make almost all of the decisions. How is it in *your* school — do the students help decide about school affairs?" they were asked. Sixty-nine percent of the 13-year-olds and 72% of the 17-year-olds said they helped make the decisions at least sometimes. Thirteen-year-old students from the Southeast were 4 points below the nation and those from the West 10 points above on this last question.

Considerably more older students report classroom discussion of political issues.

Seventeen-year-olds more often discuss politics in their classes than do 13-year-olds. Sixty-three percent of the 17-year-olds said they had discussions on national, state or local government or politics in their classes at least three or four times a month. Forty-eight percent of the 13-year-olds responded similarly. "How often do you have discussions about international politics and global problems in your classes?" Sixty-one percent of the 17-year-olds responded at least three or four times a month as did 46% of the 13-year-olds.

Eight out of 10 17-year-olds report that social studies courses increased their interest in government, public affairs or politics.

Sixty-four percent of the 13-year-olds and 91% of the 17-year-olds said that they had taken at least one course in the past three years that dealt with government, public affairs or politics. Did those courses increase their interest in government, public affairs or politics? Only the 17-year-olds were asked this question, and 79% of them said that their interest had increased.

Seventeen-year-olds believe their civics, history and government courses are relevant and present accurate pictures of American politics.

Do civics, history or government courses pay enough attention to important political issues such as race relations, political demonstrations, poverty and issues of war and peace? Ninety-three percent of the 17-year-olds answered affirmatively, saying this was at least somewhat true of the courses they had taken. Ninety percent thought those courses gave at least somewhat of an accurate picture of the way American politics works. Do these same courses give students the knowledge they need to participate in politics? Seventy-one percent of the older students thought so and replied that this was true or somewhat true of their courses. In a final related item, students were asked to react to this point of view, "Civics, history or government courses don't provide students with new ideas about politics. The students already know much of what is taught." Forty-two percent of them disagreed, noting that it was not true about their courses.

Have students studied how to acquire information about political issues? Sixty-six

percent of the 17-year-olds said they had studied this in some degree. Males were significantly above the national mean by 3 points on this item and females 3 points below. Have they studied how to analyze the values and alternatives involved in political issues? Again, 66% of the older students said they had.

In conclusion, course work in classes related to politics appears to be an important factor in performance. Such courses generally increase interest in political affairs. Schools appear to have an open climate in which students are encouraged to express themselves, to think critically and feel free to disagree with their teachers. And, most of America's teenagers believe their course work gives them relevant, useful training for effective citizenship.